

VZCZCXRO9544
RR RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHMS #1116/01 3460731
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 120731Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9063
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0024
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0055
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0041
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 0019
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 0039
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0297

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MUSCAT 001116

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMANIS HIRING MAIDS FROM THE UAE: FOLLOW-UP AND
RECOMMENDED ACTION

REF: MUSCAT 206

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Contacts in the embassies of labor-exporting countries report that some recruitment agencies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continue to force women who have run away from their Emirati sponsors to accept employment in Oman. Omani sponsors hire the women in the UAE and transport them back across the border, circumventing generally accepted procedures that allow the women's respective embassies in Muscat to approve housemaid contracts. Post has obtained a list of agencies that allegedly are involved in facilitating this practice. We recommend taking coordinated action in both sending and receiving countries to call on relevant government authorities to investigate the recruitment practices of these agencies and their partners. End Summary.

12. (C) Labor attaches at the Philippine and Sri Lankan embassies in Muscat tell poloff that they continue to host a steady stream of women in their respective safe houses who originally were recruited to work as housemaids in the UAE, but claim that they were later coerced into accepting employment in Oman. The women share similar stories -- after running away from their sponsors in the UAE for alleged mistreatment, their recruitment agencies supposedly refused to repatriate or reassign them to a new sponsor in the UAE, and then forced them to accept employment in Oman often under threat of physical or sexual abuse. In most cases, Omani sponsors hired the women from intermediary recruitment agencies in the UAE border town of Al Ain before transporting them to Oman (reftel). Contacts in the Philippine Embassy tell poloff that 30 of the 40 women currently seeking shelter in the embassy's safe house entered Oman from the UAE via the Al Ain/Al Buraimi border crossing; nine of the 13 women in the Sri Lankan embassy's safe house make the same claim.

13. (C) According to the labor attaches, some of the women report that their Omani sponsors further mistreated them - from physical abuse to withholding of pay - which precipitated their running away to the safe house. The Sri Lankan attache told poloff that the women generally show up without their passports and that some do not know the name or contact information of their Omani sponsor. With no Omani recruitment agency to contact to help recover back pay or the costs of repatriation, some of these women end up as long-term residents of the safe house while the embassy attempts to sort out their immigration status and identify funds to send them home.

14. (C) The labor attaches claim that their embassies repeatedly have raised this issue with Omani authorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), asking Oman to regulate or stop the trans-border hiring and transport of maids through the Al Ain/Al Buraimi crossing. According to the attaches, the government has responded that an Omani sponsor legally can hire a maid from the UAE as long as the sponsor has obtained a valid labor clearance and work visa covering the maid's employment in Oman. Oman views the solving of this problem, the attaches say, as primarily the responsibility of the sending countries and the UAE through tougher regulation of their recruitment agencies. The labor attaches from both embassies told poloff that their respective governments have yet to blacklist any of the agencies that the women have identified.

15. (C) The attaches argue, however, that the Omani sponsor's ability to hire a maid from the UAE, instead of using an agency to recruit maids directly from their home countries, circumvents procedures that the embassies have developed to monitor and protect their nationals' welfare. For example, both the Philippine and Sri Lankan governments have instituted minimum wage requirements (although not legally enforceable under Omani law) for their approval of all new housemaid contracts - the Philippines raised its minimum monthly wage to 154 Omani Riyal (OR) (USD 400) on March 1, 2007; the Sri Lankan minimum wage is 50 OR (USD 130). When a sponsor recruits a housemaid from either country through a licensed recruitment agency in Oman and its partner agency overseas, the sponsor must have the contract approved by the woman's embassy in Oman before government authorities in her country of origin will allow the housemaid to travel.

MUSCAT 00001116 002 OF 003

However, if a sponsor hires a housemaid from a third country (such as the UAE), the employment contract need not be approved by the maid's embassy for her to travel to Oman. (Note: Foreign embassy review of employment contracts of foreign nationals is not mandated by Omani law. End Note.) The Philippine attache stated that since his country's wage increase went into effect in March, he has noticed a troubling trend -- while demand to recruit Filipina maids has dropped by almost 60%, the number of maids claiming to have entered Oman via the UAE has gone up.

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Comment and Recommended Action
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16. (C) Since Post first reported this problem reftel, the Ambassador raised the issue of housemaids entering Oman from the UAE under threat or coercion with Minister of Manpower Juma bin Ali al Juma during a March 2007 meeting. The Ambassador recommended that Oman limit the number of locations through which newly-hired expatriate workers are allowed to enter Oman. Juma stated that he would consider the Ambassador's recommendation, but reiterated his belief that sending countries must shoulder the primary responsibility for monitoring and controlling the actions of recruitment agencies.

17. (C) Juma has a point - this is an issue that involves yet transcends Oman, and necessitates coordinated action among sending and receiving countries to solve. The Sri Lankan and Philippine labor attaches provided poloff with a list of recruitment agencies -- provided in the following paragraph -- that they claim are engaged in illicit and abusive recruitment practices, specifically facilitating the movement of housemaids from the UAE to Oman. Most of the agencies are located in the UAE in either Ajman or Al Ain; two are located in Al Buraimi, Oman. The card of one company says that the agency specializes in recruitment from India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Bangladesh. We recommend the Department propose that relevant posts approach officials in their countries about this problem and urge that

they investigate the alleged actions of these companies and their partners.

18. (SBU) List of agencies:

Al Ettifaq Gen. Services Office
P.O. Box 23142, Khalifa Street
Al Ain, UAE

Al Talal Service Est.
P.O. Box 62238
Al Ain- Abu Dhabi, UAE

Al Najm Services Manpower Consultants
P.O. Box 3003
Ajman, UAE

Al Wadi Housemaid & Baby Sitter Est.
P.O. Box 15540
Al Ain, UAE

Al Huda Services
P.O. Box 15341
Al Ain, UAE

Al Zaeem Crings Serves Est.
P.O. Box 17066
Al Ain, UAE

Al Aman Services Est.
P.O. Box 16850
Al Ain, UAE

Serveme International Manpower Resources
Al Ain, UAE

Al Jawal Manpower Supplier Services
P.O. Box 510
Ajman, UAE

Noof Manpower Supplying
P.O. Box 722

MUSCAT 00001116 003 OF 003

Ajman, UAE

Al Abraj Housemaid Supplying & Recruitment of Manpower
P.O. Box 504, Postal Code 512
Al Buraimi, Oman

Qurtoba Services
P.O. Box 5056/1143
Ajman, UAE

Al Jazeel Housemaid Supplying & Recruitment
P.O. Box 186, Postal Code 512
Al Buraimi, Oman

Hawks Gen. Services Est.
P.O. Box 1801
Al Ain, UAE

Abu Faisal Services Est.
P.O. Box 15531
Khalifa Street
Al Ain, UAE

Qortaj Labours Recruitment
P.O. Box 20571
Ajman, UAE
GRAPPO